

impact on the community's involvement in the civil process.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the Albany Park Community Center for their dedicated efforts to increase voter awareness and civic participation. Their efforts demonstrate how great the democratic process can be.

EMERGENCY AID TO AMERICAN SURVIVORS OF THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. NIKI TSONGAS

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Ms. TSONGAS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 2949, the Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act. The true scope and magnitude of the heartbreaking tragedy in Haiti continue to unfold. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians are still without reliable access to water, food, shelter, and other basic essentials. Children of all ages find themselves without family, relatives, or loved ones. While remarkable humanitarian efforts continue to reach more of those in need every day, the rebuilding effort in Haiti is one that will take more than a decade.

Americans across the country have been moved by the terrible disaster and have generously given support in any way that they can. In the Merrimack Valley and the Fifth District of Massachusetts which I represent, concerned residents have volunteered their time, donated money, organized fundraising efforts, and provided needed supplies. For example, this weekend, a restaurant in Lawrence, Massachusetts is providing free lunch to all those making a donation to the Haiti relief fund.

Our military has also done incredible work in reaching survivors, opening airports in order to facilitate the distribution of aid, and helping to maintain order.

I am pleased that the House of Representatives will pass bipartisan legislation to extend temporary aid to help the thousands of Americans who are evacuating Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake.

As of Monday, 14,000 American citizens have been evacuated from Haiti, with 40 percent of them receiving temporary repatriation assistance. The Emergency Aid to American Survivors of the Haiti Earthquake Act will provide these individuals with help in securing and paying for connecting flights, temporary lodging, food, and medical assistance.

Last week, Congress passed and the President signed bipartisan legislation, which I cosponsored, speeding up the tax deduction for charitable contributions for Haiti so that individuals making contributions by the end of February can claim these charitable contributions on their 2009 tax return.

The need in Haiti will be great for many years to come. Support from U.S. foreign aid agencies and the international community will be essential, along with efforts from ordinary citizens, like the one taking place in Lawrence this weekend.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PARKER GRIFFITH

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. GRIFFITH. Madam Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 17, 18, and 19 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY APPLICANTS' ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL REPRESENTATION ACT

HON. JOHN S. TANNER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, I am joined today by my colleagues, JIM McDERMOTT Chairman of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, SAM JOHNSON, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Social Security, and JOHN LINDER, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, in introducing the Social Security Disability Applicants' Access to Professional Representation Act. This important, bipartisan legislation will help individuals with severe disabilities navigate the often lengthy and complex process of applying for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, SSI, disability benefits.

Specifically, this bill will improve access to quality, professional representation for disability applicants by making permanent a temporary provision to expand access that is due to expire on March 1.

For many years, attorneys who represent Social Security disability claimants have been able to have their fees withheld from the claimant's past-due benefits and paid directly to them by SSA. By providing a way to ensure that attorneys are paid if the claim is successful, this system has helped to ensure that disability applicants—even those who are very low income—have access to professional representation. This representation is particularly important for those applicants who appeal their case by seeking a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. The fee paid to representatives is limited to 25 percent of the claimant's past-due benefits, subject to a dollar cap, and is only paid if the claimant wins.

In 2004, Congress adopted a provision to temporarily expand this fee-withholding system in two ways: by extending the system to SSI claims, and also by allowing qualified non-attorney representatives to participate. To be a "qualified non-attorney," a representative must pass an examination administered by the Social Security Administration, SSA, and meet other criteria designed to protect applicants.

This expansion of the fee-payment system has been very successful, and disability groups and other stakeholders have strongly supported making it permanent. In addition, both SSA and the Government Accountability Office have examined the program to extend fee-withholding to non-attorney representatives and found it was working well.

The Social Security Disability Applicants' Access to Professional Representation Act

would ensure that these successful programs continue. The bill has no cost, and even generates some savings—\$55 million over 10 years—due to user fees paid by representatives who participate.

Ensuring that individuals with severe disabilities have the help they need to navigate the complex benefit application process is a goal on which we can all agree. I urge you to support this bipartisan legislation to move us closer to this goal.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, on January 26, 2010, I was unexpectedly detained and could not vote on H. Res. 1011, recognizing the importance of cervical health and of detecting cervical cancer during its earliest stages and supporting the goals and ideals of Cervical Health Awareness Month. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

HONORING PIT MARTIN

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Mr. QUIGLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of former Chicago Blackhawk, Pit Martin. Pit was born in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, played 17 seasons in the NHL, and died in a tragic snowmobile accident two winters ago. He was only 64.

Pit is remembered as a hockey player, and for good reason because he was a darned great one. His storied career spanned four teams and 19 years—including 11 seasons with the Chicago Blackhawks. In 740 games, Pit scored 243 goals, dished out 384 assists, and was the "M" on the Chicago Stadium's iconic "MPH" line with Jim Pappin and Dennis Hull. He was named to four All-Star teams and led the Hawks to two Stanley Cup Finals.

But anyone who stood 5 feet, 8 inches tall and weighed 168 pounds in the NHL can never be defined by numbers alone—and so it was with Pit. After the 1969–70 season, he was awarded the Bill Masterson Trophy, exemplifying the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to hockey. He was never the biggest dog in the fight, but during the 1,101 games he suited up for, no one fought harder, worked harder, and did more with less.

When Pit passed away, Hall-of-Fame linesman Matt Pavelich summed it up best: "He was small, but he wasn't timid. I just remember him as a real nice guy." The Blackhawk family and the city of Chicago miss him.

Let's see if we can finish what he helped start, and bring home a Stanley Cup this year, for Pit, and all of Chicago.